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A Preliminary Note on the Variation of Scutellation in the Garter Snakes.— Three years ago the writer began an investigation into the relationships of the different races of garter snakes (Thannophis) in an attempt to determine the laws involved in the differentiation of the genus. The results of this work are being included in a monograph of the genus, but as it will be several months before this work can be completed it has been thought best to publish a brief outline of some of the conclusions.

In the progress of this investigation it was seen very early that before a serious attempt could be made to determine the affinities of the different races, the significance of the variations in scale arrangement or scutellation must be determined. This was attempted with the following results:

(1) The number of dorsal scale rows on an individual snake decreases posteriorly by the elimination of certain rows, and the series eliminated are always the same for snakes with the same number of rows, as for example *T. sirtalis* and *T. saurita*.

(2) The rows dropped posteriorly in individual snakes are those which have entirely disappeared in races with a fewer number of scale rows.

(3) The reduction in the number of dorsal scale rows is generally accompanied by a reduction in the number of labial, ventral, and subcaudal scales (gastrosteges and urosteges).

(4) There is considerable evidence that the reduction in scutellation is directly or indirectly associated with a diminution in size.

The general reduction in scutellation described above is exhibited by each of the several (natural?) groups into which the genus can be divided. These groups all occur together only in northern Mexico, which may be considered the center of origin for the genus. The races that occur in this region all exhibit the maximum scutellation for their respective groups, the dwarfing in size and scutellation taking place at points away from the center of origin. The discovery of these methods of variation in the different series of scales has been an indispensable aid in determining the affinities of the different races.

ALEXANDER G. RUTHVEN

A Simple Method for removing the Gelatinous Coats of Eggs.— In the course of work in which it was necessary to handle a number of amphibian eggs the writer hit upon a simple and rapid method of freeing them from their gelatinous envelopes. While, because of its very simplicity, it seems impossible that other workers have not used the method, still the writer has been able to find no reference to it in embryological literature and he records it here, therefore, because he feels that it will be very serviceable to workers who have to handle such material.

The method consists simply in placing the egg on a bit of blotting paper and then rolling it over and over, thus reversing the small boy's method of rolling up a large snow ball. Either fresh or preserved eggs may in this way be rapidly removed from their envelopes and transferred by means of a spear-headed needle or a paper spatula to the fixing reagent. The method worked well on frog and salamander eggs that had been preserved in formalin for two years, and on millipede eggs which had been similarly preserved for over three years.

When using the method with certain kinds of fresh material, the eggs may be so soft that when finally unrolled from their coats they are drawn down so as to adhere tightly to the blotting paper. To avoid this, (1) roll them off onto a paper of harder texture just before the last trace of gelatinous film has been removed from their surfaces, or (2) first fix them (*e. g.*, in Gilson's mercuro-nitric mixture) and then, before further hardening in alcohol, roll them out of their envelopes on the blotter.

Michael F. Guyer

The Star-nosed Mole on Long Island, N. Y.— In a recent (1902) list of the mammals of Long Island, Arthur H. Helme states that the only evidence of the presence of the star-nosed mole (*Condylura cristata*) on the island that has come to his knowledge is the finding of a single dead specimen. It seems then worth recording that on April 18 a star-nosed mole, which had been caught by a cat, was sent me from Great Neck, Long Island, by Miss Elise Gignoux.

John Treadwell Nichols

Notes.— Under the name *Cirrodrilus cirratus* U. Pierantoni has described[1] a peculiar-looking worm, about 3 mm. long, found as a parasite on the crayfish of Japan. It is cylindrical, and consists of a large head and following this eight body segments, the anterior six having short fleshy finger-like processes arranged in a transverse line on the ventral surface. The mouth is nearly surrounded by a ring of similar longer processes, whence the name cirratus. The mouth is armed with a pair of horny jaws like those of certain Branchiob-

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[1] Bolletino Societià di Naturalisti in Napoli, 19, 1905.